

ANNETTE CURTIS KLAUSE

Blood AND Chocolate

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ivian Gandillon relishes the change, the sweet, fierce ache that carries her from girl to wolf. At sixteen, she is beautiful and strong, and all the young wolves are on her tail. But Vivian still grieves for her dead father; her pack remains leaderless and in disarray, and she feels lost in the suburbs of Maryland. She longs for a normal life. But what is normal for a werewolf?

Then Vivian falls in love with a human, a meat-boy. Aiden is kind and gentle, a welcome relief from the squabbling pack. He's fascinated by magic, and Vivian longs to reveal herself to him. Surely he would understand her and delight in the wonder of her dual nature, not fear her as an ordinary human would.

Vivian's divided loyalties are strained further when a brutal murder threatens to expose the pack. Moving between two worlds, she does not seem to belong in either, and her actions may endanger both. What is she really—human or beast? Which tastes sweeter—blood or chocolate?

www.randomhouse.com/teens
Cover illustration by Shane Rebenschied
COVER PRINTED IN THE USA

ISBN 978-0-385-90434-6



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17

Vivian climbed naked through her bedroom window and tumbled onto her bed. She had changed into her human form in the backyard bushes before she scaled the drainpipe to the porch roof. Only a rosy glow tinged the western sky. She hoped the neighbors weren't early risers.

It seemed an eternity since she'd run from the Ordeal. She must have flown like the wind to lose Gabriel, but she hadn't stopped to catch her breath until the sounds of his pursuit were long silent. She'd hidden in a shallow cave near a rocky crest until she was sure Gabriel hadn't tracked her; then she'd taken off for home. She'd never run that far before. The journey had taken all night.

Her palms and soles were bloody, and her body ached. Gingerly she limped to the bathroom and turned on the shower. She ran the water as hot as she could stand and drenched her body, her face, and her hair, as if trying to wash the last twelve hours away. *How could I do that to Astrid?* she asked herself over and over.

Esmé and Rudy hadn't come home yet, but they wouldn't be far behind her, she was sure. After the celebration, they would have stayed long enough to bury the dead in an isolated spot, then headed back. She cranked up the air conditioner in her other window and locked her door. How could they let her behave that way? How could they actually approve?

She pulled the sheet over her head, but she couldn't sleep. Was she truly obliged to become Gabriel's mate, or did winning the fight only give her first dibs, so to speak? Could she delegate the role? Maybe she could appoint Astrid. She giggled half hysterically.

Bloody Moon, why did Gabriel want her? Now he was pack leader, even some of the mated bitches would slink behind the bushes with him. He could go to one of the other communities and easily bring back a wife.

Vivian's eyes shot open with excitement. That was what she'd suggest. Surely the pack wouldn't condone his mating her against her will, would they? She relaxed and her eyes closed again. Sleep wound a cotton shroud around her.

When Vivian woke it was dark outside. The house was silent. She had slept the day away. She vaguely remembered half waking much earlier when someone rattled her doorknob. That must have been Esmé's voice she'd heard call her name. *I'll get up in a minute*, she told herself, then rolled over and tumbled back into unconsciousness.